



The wait for U.S. passports is creating travel purgatory and snarling summer plans



Marni Larsen and her son, Damon Rasmussen of Holladay, Utah, wait their turn in line hoping to snag her son's passport outside the Los Angeles Passport Agency at the Federal Building in Los Angeles on Wednesday, June 14, 2023.

Associated Press



The Day of Independence



A promotional banner for TGI Fridays' 4th of July Special. The banner features a white background with a subtle wood-grain texture. On the left, there is a photograph of a Bacon Cheeseburger, a tall glass of iced cola, and a side of french fries. The TGI Fridays logo is centered at the top, flanked by two rows of blue stars. Below the logo, the text '4TH OF JULY SPECIAL' is written in large, bold, red capital letters. To the right of this text, the details of the special are listed: 'Bacon Cheeseburger, Fries, Soft Drink & A Shot of Tequila' in red, followed by the price '\$15' in large red font, with 'Excl. service charge' in smaller black text. At the bottom, the location and hours are provided: 'VISIT US AT PASEO HERENCIA MALL - ACROSS THE HOLIDAY INN 2ND FLOOR ABOVE STARBUCKS OPEN FROM 11AM - 10PM'.

The wait for U.S. passports is creating travel purgatory and snarling summer plans

From Front

By **LAURIE KELLMAN, REBECCA SANTANA and DAVID KOENIG**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seeking a valid U.S. passport for that 2023 trip? Buckle up, wishful traveler, for a very different journey before you step anywhere near an airport.

A much-feared backup of U.S. passport applications has smashed into a wall of government bureaucracy as worldwide travel rebounds toward record pre-pandemic levels — with too few humans to handle the load. The result, say aspiring travelers in the U.S. and around the world, is a maddening pre-travel purgatory defined, at best, by costly uncertainty.

With family dreams and big money on the line, passport seekers describe a slow-motion agony of waiting, worrying, holding the line, refreshing the screen, complaining to Congress, paying extra fees and following incorrect directions. Some applicants are buying additional plane tickets to snag in-process passports where they sit — in other cities — in time to make the flights they booked in the first place.

So grim is the outlook that U.S. officials aren't even denying the problem or predicting when it will ease. They're blaming the epic wait times on lingering pandemic-related staffing shortages and a pause of online processing this year. That's left the passport agency flooded with a record-busting 500,000 applications a week. The deluge is on-track to top last year's 22 million passports issued, the State Department says. It was early March when Dallas-area florist Ginger Collier applied for four passports ahead of a family vacation at the end of June. The clerk, she said, estimated wait times at eight to 11 weeks. They'd have their passports a month before they needed them. "Plenty of time," Collier re-



The cover of a U.S. Passport is displayed in Tigard, Ore., Dec. 11, 2021.

called thinking. Then the State Department upped the wait time for a regular passport to as much as 13 weeks. "We'll still be okay," she thought.

At two weeks to travel, this was Collier's assessment: "I can't sleep." Failure to obtain the family's passports would mean losing \$4,000, she said, as well as the chance to meet one of her sons in Italy after a study-abroad semester. "My nerves are shot, because I may not be able to get to him," she said. She calls the toll-free number every day, holds for as much as 90 minutes to be told — at best — that she might be able to get a required appointment at passport offices in other states.

"I can't afford four more plane tickets anywhere in the United States to get a passport when I applied in plenty of time," she said.

By March, concerned travelers began asking for answers and then demanding help, including from their representatives in the House and Senate, who widely reported at hearings

this year that they were receiving more complaints from constituents on passport delays than any other issue.

The U.S. secretary of state had an answer, of a sort.

"With COVID, the bottom basically dropped out of the system," Antony Blinken told a House subcommittee March 23. When demand for travel all but disappeared during the pandemic, he said, the government let contractors go and reassigned staff that had been dedicated to handling passports.

Around the same time, the government also halted an online renewal system "to make sure that we can fine tune it and improve it," Blinken said. He said the department is hiring agents as quickly as possible, opening more appointments and trying to address the crisis in other ways.

Passport applicants lit up social media groups, toll-free numbers and lawmakers' phone lines with questions, appeals for advice and cries for help.

At U.S. consulates over-

seas, the quest for U.S. visas and passports isn't much brighter. On a day in June, people in New Delhi could expect to wait 451 days for a visa interview, according to the website. Those in Sao Paulo could plan on waiting more than 600 days. Aspiring travelers in Mexico City were waiting about 750 days; in Bogota, Colombia, it was 801 days.

In Israel, the need is especially acute. More than 200,000 people with citizenship in both countries live in Israel. On July 2, Batsheva Gutterman started looking for appointments immediately after she had a baby in December, with an eye toward attending her sister's wedding in July, in Raleigh, N.C. Her quest for three passports stretched from January to June, days before travel. And it only resolved after Gutterman paid a small fee to join a WhatsApp group that alerted her to new appointments, which stay available for only a few seconds.

She ultimately got three appointments on three

consecutive days — bureaucracy embodied.

"This makes me incredibly uneasy having a baby in Israel as an American citizen, knowing there is no way I can fly with that baby until we get lucky with an appointment," she said.

There appeared to be some progress. The wait for an appointment for a renewal on June 8 stood at 360 days. By July 2, the wait was 90 days, according to the web site.

Back in the U.S., Marni Larsen of Holladay, Utah, stood in line in Los Angeles, California, on June 14, in hopes of snagging her son's passport. That way, she hoped, the pair could meet the rest of their family, who had already left as scheduled for Europe, for a long-planned vacation. She'd applied for her son's passport two months earlier and spent weeks checking for updates online or through a frustrating call system. As the mid-June vacation loomed, Larsen reached out to Sen. Mitt Romney's office, where one of four people he says is assigned full-time to passport issues were able to track down the document in New Orleans. It was supposed to be shipped to Los Angeles, where she got an appointment to retrieve it. That meant Larsen had to buy new tickets for herself and her son to Los Angeles and reroute their trip from there to Rome. All on a bet that her son's passport was indeed shipped as promised. "We are just waiting in this massive line of tons of people," Larsen said. "It's just been a nightmare." They succeeded. And Ginger Collier? She found her happy ending. "I just got my passports!" she texted. A seven-hour visit at the passport office in Dallas, plus a return the next day, produced the passports with four days to spare. "What a ridiculous process," Collier said. Nevertheless, the reunion with her son in Italy was sweet. She texted last week: "It was the best hug ever!" □

What's 'Bidenomics'? The president hopes a dubious nation embraces his ideas condensed into the term

By JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has long struggled to neatly summarize his sprawling economic vision.

It's been hard for voters to digest the mix of roads-and-bridges spending, tax hikes on big companies, tax credits for parents, tax breaks for renewable energy, grants to build computer chip factories, insulin price caps and slogans like "Build Back Better."

And that barely covers the full breadth of what the administration is doing and trying to do.

Last week, the president gave a speech on "Bidenomics" in hopes that the term will lodge in voters' minds ahead of the 2024 elections. But what is Bidenomics? Let's just say the White House definition is different from the Republican one: evidence that catchphrases can be double-edged.

Biden says his economic philosophy is the opposite of a Republican approach that favors broad tax cuts to spur growth. He sees the



President Joe Biden delivers remarks on the economy, Wednesday, June 28, 2023, at the Old Post Office in Chicago

government as using the tax code in a more targeted fashion and fashioning other programs to foster investment in new technologies, create jobs and boost upward mobility. He wants to do more to educate workers and foster competition within the U.S. economy in hopes of reducing

prices.

"I came into office determined to change the economic direction of this country, to move from trickle-down economics to what everyone in The Wall Street Journal and Financial Times began to call 'Bidenomics,'" the president said. "I didn't come

up with the name. I really didn't."

But to Republicans, "Bidenomics" is a slur they can deploy. It's a philosophy of government spending and anti-oil policies that they say fueled a spike in inflation last summer to a four-decade high. High prices have left U.S. adults deeply

pessimistic about the economy, with just 34% approving of Biden's leadership on the issue, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs.

Based on follow-up interviews with poll respondents, they're far more aware of gasoline and grocery store prices than the details of Biden's policies. When asked over the course of multiple polls, a few could cite the bipartisan infrastructure package that Biden signed into law. But the Inflation Reduction Act as well as the CHIPS and Science Act have yet to fully surface on the public radar, despite outreach by the administration and news coverage.

GOP lawmakers were faster to embrace the catch-term than the president.

"Instead of priming the pump, Bidenomics has emptied the tank," future House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said in a 2021 floor speech. "From inflation to gas lines, the American economy today looks more like it did in 1979 than 2019." □

Associated Press

Price of a U.S. stamp rises to 66 cents, the second hike this year

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Stamps prices are on the rise, again — one of several changes the U.S. Postal Service is rolling out this month.

Starting Sunday, the cost

of the first-class "forever" stamps will jump from 63 to 66 cents. The latest price comes just months after forever stamps climbed from 60 to 63 cents in January, following a series of similar

increases in recent years. When announcing its intention to raise forever stamp prices to 66 cents earlier this year, the USPS cited rising "operating expenses fueled by inflation" and the impacts of "a previously defective pricing model" noting that changes to mail service costs "are needed to provide the Postal Service with much needed revenue."

Beyond forever stamps, a handful of other mail services will also see price increases starting Sunday. The cost of sending a first-class one-ounce metered letter, for example, will rise to 63 cents and domestic postcards will jump to 51 cents. International postcards and one-ounce let-

ters are both set to move to \$1.50.

The Postal Service will also launch a new package shipping service, USPS Ground Advantage, on Sunday to replace and combine previous plans. Ground Advantage pricing will reflect a 3.2% decline in retail prices and a 0.7% drop for commercial, the Postal Service says.

The Postal Regulatory Commission approved both the price changes and the implementation of Ground Advantage ahead of this month's changes. The price changes had also been approved by the Governors of the U.S. Postal Service as of the Postal Service's April notice.

Sunday marks the fifth jump

in forever stamp prices seen since the start of 2019, when the postage cost 50 cents apiece. When adjusted for inflation, 50 cents in January 2019 equates to about 60 cents in the spring of 2023, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI inflation calculator.

For the first quarter of 2023, the Postal Service's operating revenue was \$21.5 billion — an increase of \$206 million, even though volume declined by 1.7 billion pieces, or 4.8%, compared with the same period last year. All told, the Postal Service reported a net loss of \$1 billion for the first quarter, but that was a \$519 million improvement over the \$1.5 billion net loss during the same period last year. □



A mailman wears a face mask while completing his route on May 23, 2020, in downtown Littleton, Colo.

Associated Press

Fright over crack on N.C. ride serves as reminder of risks at amusement parks

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and ERIK VERDUZCO

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — A visible crack in the support beam of a North Carolina roller coaster served as a reminder of the risks that sometimes arise with amusement park rides, particularly as families and adrenaline junkies flock to the attractions throughout the summer.

Video footage of the Charlotte-based Carowinds' popular Fury 325 known as a "Giga coaster" due to its dramatic height of 325 feet (99 meters) showed a key support beam bending with the top visibly detached as cars packed with unsuspecting passengers whirled by at speeds of up to 95 mph (150 kph).

The park, which straddles the North Carolina and South Carolina line, closed the ride late last week as questions swirled about how the crack occurred. Those answers remained largely unknown as state investigators were on site in Monday morning.

Tommy Petty, chief of the state Department of La-



The Fury 325 roller coaster at Carowinds amusement park is seen on Monday, July 3, 2023, in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press

bor's Amusement Device Bureau, confirmed investigators "already came and went" from Carowinds on Monday but declined to share details about their findings. Meanwhile, Carowinds said in a statement that all of its rides, including Fury 325, are inspected daily "to ensure their proper functioning

and structural integrity." Several Carowinds visitors said they were aware that the ride had been closed for repairs, but they were not deterred from enjoying the park's other attractions. Greg Bledsoe, a 22-year-old season pass holder, visited the park Monday despite having watched the viral video of the Fury 325

track separating from its support beam mid-ride.

"I'm just glad I wasn't on it because I don't want to fall off. I'm glad nobody fell off," he said.

While Bledsoe said the video was "a bit of a shock," he remains confident in the park's overall safety and plans to make good use of his season pass.

"Hopefully they get it fixed before the season's over so I can ride it some more," he said of the broken coaster. "It's like the main thing here."

Industry experts have been quick to counter that millions of Americans hop on roller coasters, Ferris wheels, water slides and many other rides without ever experiencing issues. They note injury rates are extremely low.

A 2021 survey compiled on behalf of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions found "0.9 injuries per million rides," said Caitlin Dineen, the group's spokesperson. That year, more than 1,200 ride-related injuries were reported out of the typical 1.7 billion rides that take place each year across 400 locations in North America. "Safety is the top priority for the global attractions industry," Dineen said. "An excellent safety record is in the best interest of the industry, and leaders within it are committed to providing safe and secure attractions for all their guests and visitors." □

Police confirm two more Wichita club shooting victims, bringing total to 11 hurt

By The Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Two additional gunshot victims have emerged from a weekend shooting at a Kansas nightclub, bringing the total number of injured people to 11, Wichita police said Monday.

Meanwhile, a St. Louis-area man was arrested in connection with the shooting, and police are working to "identify all individuals involved in the shooting and hold them accountable," according to a news release.

Several shooters opened fire just before 1 a.m. Sunday inside the City Nightz club in downtown Wichita,

according to police. Seven people were initially listed as injured by gunfire, and

two others were trampled in the rush to escape.

Two additional shooting



A shooting early Sunday morning, July 2, 2023, at City Nightz nightclub in Wichita, Kan., left multiple people with gunshot wounds and a few more people hospitalized after being trampled in a rush for the exits, police said.

Associated Press

victims arrived at hospitals later Sunday with minor injuries, Officer Juan Rebolledo said. All of the victims are expected to survive, he said.

One suspect, a 31-year-old man from Florissant, Missouri, was arrested on suspicion of aggravated criminal battery. He had not been formally charged as of late Monday morning. Shots were fired from at least four guns inside the club, police said. Four guns were recovered and police were working to determine if they were the weapons used by the shooters.

The gunshot victims seven men and two women

ranged in age from 22 to 34, police said. The two people trampled were a 30-year-old woman and a 31-year-old male.

Detective Chris Merceau said at a news conference Sunday morning that police have been called about a dozen times this year to the nightclub, including for a report of aggravated battery and a drive-by shooting on May 21.

He said police met with the club's owner after the May shooting and discussed the importance of using electronic wands to detect weapons on patrons and surveillance cameras. □

NATO readies military plans to defend against bruised but unbowed Russia

By **LORNE COOK**
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Russia's armed forces are bruised but by no means beaten in the war in Ukraine, a top NATO military officer said Monday, as he laid out the biggest revamp to the organization's military plans since the Cold War should Moscow dare to widen the conflict.

"They might not be 11 feet tall, but they are certainly not 2 feet tall," the Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, told reporters. "So, we should never underestimate the Russians and their ability to bounce back."

U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts are set to endorse a major shakeup of the alliance's planning system at a summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius next week.

NATO, as an organization, does not provide weapons or ammunition to Ukraine. It's sought to avoid being dragged into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia. At the same time, it is massively reinforcing the security of member countries near Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Around 40,000 troops are



Servicemen of the United States 101 Airborne Division run during an exercise at the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, near the Black Sea port of Constanta, Romania, Friday, March 31, 2023
Associated Press

on standby from Estonia in the north down to Romania on the Black Sea. About 100 aircraft take to the skies in that territory each day, and a total of 27 warships are operating in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. Those numbers are set to rise.

Under its new plans, NATO aims to have up to 300,000 troops ready to move to its eastern flank within 30 days. The plans divide its territory

into three zones: the high north and Atlantic area, a zone north of the Alps, and another in southern Europe. Bauer said that NATO's new planning is based on the strength of the Russian army before President Vladimir Putin launched the war on Ukraine almost 17 months ago. He said the war has depleted Russia's army, but not its navy or air force.

Of Russia's ground forces,

around "94% is now engaged in the war in Ukraine," Bauer said.

"What we see in general is that the Russians are careful around NATO. They are not for seeking a conflict with NATO. I think that is a sign that they are very, very busy," he said. "In the land domain, I don't think they have a lot of forces available to do anything to anyone else."

"But we are convinced

that the Russians are going to reconstitute," he said. "We will continue to look at them as a serious threat, in the maritime, and in the air especially, and in space, they are still very, very, capable, let alone of course in nuclear."

A revolt by Wagner mercenaries in Russia late last month raised deep security concerns in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland after a deal was reached for their leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to be allowed to take refuge in Belarus.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda said that neighboring countries would face a heightened danger if the Wagner Group deploys its "serial killers" just over their border.

Vilnius lies around 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the Belarus border.

Lithuania wants to have a permanent NATO presence on its territory.

"We're confident we know what's going on, and right now we see no changes. But that doesn't take our eye off what we need to do every day," Major General Matthew Van Wagenen told reporters. "If we needed to change posture, we could do it rapidly." □

U.N. chief urges maritime nations to chart course for net zero shipping emissions by 2050

LONDON (AP) — The head of the United Nations called Monday for maritime nations to agree on a course

for the shipping industry to reduce its climate-harming

emissions to net zero by the middle of the century at the latest.

The appeal by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres came at the start of a meeting of the International Maritime Organization in London that's seen as key for helping achieve the international goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit).

"Shipping, which accounts for almost 3% of global emissions, will be vital," Guterres said.

He urged delegates to agree a new greenhouse gas strategy for shipping

that includes "ambitious science-based targets starting in 2030 — both on absolute emissions reductions and the use of clean fuels." The IMO's current target is for the shipping industry to cut its emissions by at least half from 2008 to 2050. Guterres said the new targets should include all greenhouse gas emissions caused by the industry and backed the idea of introducing a carbon price for shipping.

Campaigners have suggested that funds generated from a levy on emissions could be used to help poor nations tackle climate

change, though the industry wants the money to go toward the development of clean technologies.

In May, The Associated Press revealed an influential shipping industry group was quietly warning shippers to think carefully before they sign up for an ambitious plan to reduce maritime emissions.

The International Chamber of Shipping, which represents four fifths of the world's commercial fleet, said member companies should "give careful consideration to the possible implications" before adopting stringent targets. □



Cargo ship M/V Bavaria is assisted by tug boats as it prepares to dock at Subic port in Zambales province, northwestern Philippines on Thursday, May 30, 2019.

Associated Press

US measure would ban products containing mineral mined with child labor in Congo

By **TAIWO ADEBAYO** Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — A measure has been introduced in the U.S. House to ban imported products containing minerals critical to electric vehicle batteries but mined through child labor and other abusive conditions in Congo, where China has enormous mining stakes.

The bill targets China, which sponsor Republican Rep. Chris Smith of New Jersey says uses forced labor and exploits children to mine cobalt in the impoverished but resource-rich central African country. Congo is the world's largest producer of cobalt, a mineral used to make lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, a key pillar of President Joe Biden's climate plans. China controls the majority of the cobalt mines in Congo, strengthening Beijing's position in the global supply chain for electric vehicles



Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., speaks during the House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing on the administration foreign policy priorities on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, in Washington.
Associated Press

and other products.

"On the backs of trafficked workers and child laborers, the Chinese Communist Party is exploiting the

vast cobalt resources of the Democratic Republic of Congo to fuel its economy and global agenda," Smith's office said in a

statement following the bill's introduction Friday. The legislation comes amid strained ties between the U.S. and China. Biden re-

ferred to Chinese President Xi Jinping as a "dictator" during a campaign fundraiser last month, leading to outcry from Beijing. That has followed tensions over a Chinese surveillance balloon that the U.S. government shot down, U.S.-led restrictions on China's access to advanced computer chips, and the status and security of Taiwan.

But the Biden administration is looking to ease those tensions with a visit to China this week from U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, following Secretary of State Antony Blinken's two-day stop in Beijing last month. China holds a 68% stake in Sicominex, the copper and cobalt joint venture with Congo's state mining firm Gecamines, following a 2008 infrastructure-for-minerals deal, which Congo now is seeking to review over concerns it gets too little benefit from the arrangement. □

Hong Kong police offer rewards for arrests of 8 overseas pro-democracy activists

By **ZEN SOO** Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong police on Monday accused eight self-exiled pro-democracy activists of violating the territory's harsh National Security Law and offered rewards of 1 million Hong Kong dollars (\$127,600) each for information leading to their arrests.

The rewards are the first for suspects accused of violating the Beijing-imposed legislation since it took effect in June 2020. It outlaws subversion, secession, collusion with foreign forces and terrorism.

The eight activists are former pro-democracy lawmakers Nathan Law, Ted Hui and Dennis Kwok, lawyer Kevin Yam, unionist Mung Siu-tat and activists Finn Lau, Anna Kwok and

Elmer Yuen, police announced at a news conference.

They are currently living in the U.S., Britain, Canada and Australia after some were earlier accused of various other offenses.

Steven Li, chief superintendent of the police's National Security Department, said arrest warrants have been issued for the eight under the National Security Law. He acknowledged that police will not be able to arrest them if they remain overseas but urged them

to return to Hong Kong and surrender for a reduction in their sentences. Li said the new charges and rewards are not intended to spread fear but are merely "enforcing the law."

He cited articles of the security law which state that police have extraterritorial jurisdiction, and said they would pursue people overseas who endanger Hong Kong's national security.

The news conference came less than two weeks after the state-owned Ta Kung Pao newspaper issued an editorial stating that the National Security Law applies to people outside Hong Kong, and that China, as a member of Interpol, could request assistance from other countries in arresting fugitives.

Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous Chinese city, has come under increasingly tight scrutiny by Beijing following months of political strife in 2019. Authorities have cracked down on dissent with over 260 people, including many pro-democracy figures, arrested under the National Security Law. Hong Kong's political system has also undergone a major overhaul to ensure that only "patriots" loyal to Beijing can hold office. The police force said it has evidence that the eight violated the National Security Law. According to the warrants, lawyer Yam, former legislator Dennis Kwok and activists Yuen, Lau and Anna Kwok are accused of foreign collusion for allegedly calling for sanctions against Hong Kong officials. □



Hong Kong activist Nathan Law takes part in a protest during a meeting of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, in Rome, Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2020.

Associated Press

The Day of Independence

ORANJESTAD — Today is a federal holiday in the United States and although this is not the case in Aruba we do celebrate Independence Day. With most of our visitors being American citizens, our island joins in typical American traditions and celebrations. July 4th, Independence Day, is the most important one in the row.

On July 4, 1776, the 13 colonies claimed their independence from England, an event which eventually led to the formation of the United States. Each year on the fourth of July Americans celebrate this historic event.

Conflict between the colonies and England was already a year old when the colonies convened a Continental Congress in Philadelphia in the sum-

mer of 1776. In a June 7 session in the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall), Richard Henry Lee of Virginia presented a resolution with the famous words: "Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

On the first Independence Day celebration, held in Philadelphia on July 4, 1777, when the country was still in the midst of the Revolutionary War against Britain, citizens came together to watch their new nation's sky illuminated in a grand display meant to raise spirits. For this reason fireworks



are part of the celebration as also the typical American lifestyle is honored. This awesome holiday includes many customs like parades and concerts. During the day, families get together for picnics and parades. People wear red, white,

and blue and wave American flags.

On Aruba most of the resorts set up celebrations and special dinners for their guests. There are fireworks on the beach and 4th of July club parties around

the hotel area, food specials and more! Ask your hotel concierge for more details.

On behalf of Aruba Today we wish everyone a fantastic 4th of July! □

Source: [military.com](https://www.military.com).



(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.

The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire

arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves. From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's

Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass

Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitchhike, the man saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitchhiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the

hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn't some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

Frenchman's pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass contributes a lot to our culture of folkloric story-telling. □

Source: [visitaruba.com](https://www.visitaruba.com)



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National Park Arikok: Aruba's biggest nature conservation

The National Park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are numerous animals to discover, for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs



on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches—a very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and

hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Nature Conservation

The protected area of National Park Arikok was officially established in 2000. Arikok National Park is a 34 square kilometers (7907 acres) of natural area, located at the north-eastern part of Aruba which contains examples of most of the island's flora and fauna against a backdrop of great geological complexity. We are proud to state that approximately 18% of the total land area of Aruba is assigned as a National Park, to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, geology and historical remains present within Arikok National Park.

The Landscape

There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which

the name of the park is derived.

The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (boca's). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouth of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (boca's) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.

Arikok is also home to Conchi, Aruba's most important natural attraction; also known as The Natural Pool. The journey to the Pool is and adventure by itself and only possible by foot, horse, ATV or 4x4 vehicle.

Cultural and Historical components

There are a number of sites within the park that attest to the history of Aruba. The Caquetío Indians left rock paintings in Cunucu Arikok and Fontein Cave. The bird drawing in the park logo is a copy of one of these historical artistic expressions.

Old plantation (Cunucus) sites tell the story of an active yet challenging agricultural past.

These Cunucus were also residential areas for the few

families that worked the land. These families found ways to survive in the difficult conditions, and were able to erect their homes with materials found in the area. Two of these adobe houses have been restored. Park rangers are learning many of the old building techniques in order to preserve this unique Aruban mud-house. At Cunucu Arikok and near Plantation Prins you can find these adobe houses.

Park Management

For the management of the park, a dedicated foundation "Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok" (FPNA), known today as the Aruba National Park Foundation was established in July 2003. In February 2017, mangrove and wetland RAMSAR site #198 Spanish Lagoon was annexed to Arikok National Park due to its importance as a feeding and breeding area for water birds and as a nursery area for a variety of marine organisms. With this addition, the areas under FPNA management increased by 70 hectares while the amount of species of flora and fauna to be conserved to over 250. On December 21st, 2018 (AB 2018 no. 77) Parke Marino Aruba – currently consisting of four marine protected areas (MPAs) – was officially established and subsequently brought under management of FPNA. In 2019 management plans will be established for the new MPAs which include: coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove systems, a large diversity of breeding seabirds. Parke Marino Aruba also contains potential shark nursery areas, endangered sea turtle nesting beaches and marine mammal nursery areas. □



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Aruba Tourism Authority honor loyal visitors at Tamarijn All-Inclusive Resort



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure to recognize Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. These Goodwill Ambassadors were respectively honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassadors Mr. Roger & Mrs. Debra Carmicheal from Indiana, United States.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Tamarijn All-Inclusive Resort bestowed the Goodwill Ambassador certificate to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by Mr. & Mrs. Carmicheal were:

Aruba's year-round sunny weather – It is always sunny here!
"Aruba's warm and friendly people who always treat us like family".
"This wonderful resort".
The ease of moving around.
Aruba has great food & drinks.

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Mr. & Mrs. Carmicheal for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". ☐

Aruba to me



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, like-

ness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from **Patricia Massey who lives in Woodbridge, CT USA**

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is tranquility, relocation and escapism."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! ☐



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Episode XII

Geo Insular Patrimony

Rock Formations and Rock Art Sites

Two week ago was the last day permitted by law on which the inhabitants of this island had their opportunity to express and voice their concerns and documented observations regarding ROP or insular territorial and space management plan for the next 10 years.

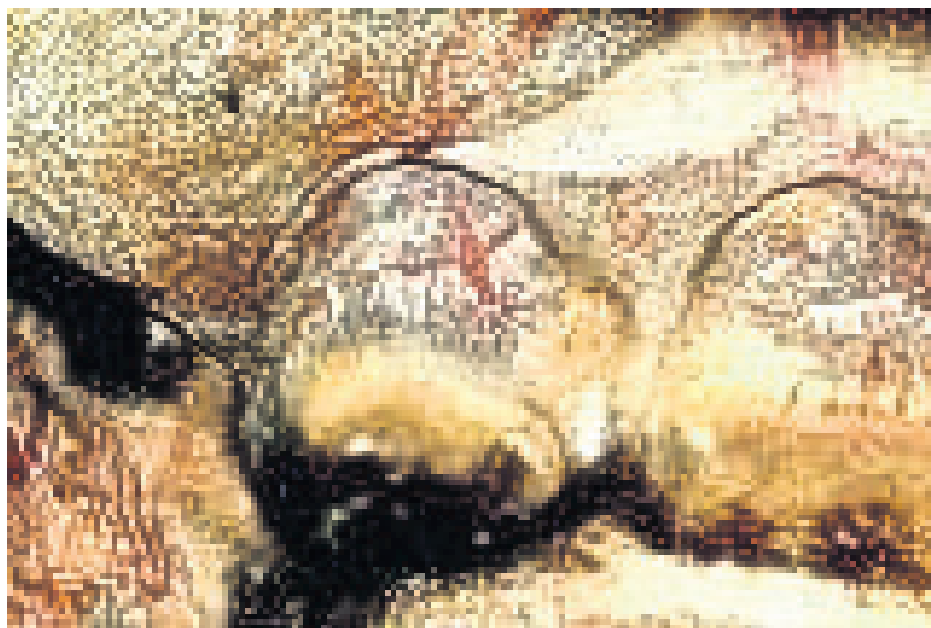
Document which had to be delivered at DIP, Aruba's Department of Infrastructure and Planning. Remarkable was the impact the Town Hall Meeting made, organized by the Island's Chamber of Commerce and Industry revealing the lack of information available for the general public in finding help to assess their individual situation problems and worries. A consolidated report request answers to the relative importance of all the issues presented that night concerning island's territorial providence.

We as Etnia Nativa's voiced and share our knowledge in this matter concerning the status and importance of archeological sites, rock formations, historical as well



as Natural Monuments, island's endemic flora and fauna preservation, waste management and demographic impact on the natural environment in relation with UN SDG indicators.

Our island has a significant collection of prehistoric rock art sites. While efforts has been made in the past to educate the general public



to participate in the conservation of our Natural Heritage, the same unfortunately cannot be said of rock-art situated in the open-air. Very little has been done to understand and managing weather effects and erosion phenomena affecting ancient imagery within the relatively protected environments of caves and rock formation shelters. Despite the fact that the number of known sites has risen in recent decades there are few examples in which the weathering and erosion dynamics are under investigation with a view to developing proposals and to mitigate the impact of natural and cultural processes. Most of the work being done in different parts of the world appears to be ad-hoc, with minimal communication on such matters between teams and with the wider archaeological community. From the many calls for conservation of rock-art coming from very different parts of the world it becomes apparent that there are many threats to the perpetuation of this significant heritage.

Nevertheless, while some authors reference physical weathering as the most pressing risk, others invoke the negative effects of biodegradation, especially when lichen colonization is concerned. In the present a relevant case study regarding vandalism at rock-art sites is recommended. We suggested that the way emphasis is placed on the different forms of risk has much to do with the specific area of expertise of each researcher involved, and, more importantly, with the different environments where rock-art exists. Hence, different settings will determine which weathering patterns are more active and pose



more urgent risks to be dealt with by rock-art managers and conservators. The worldwide paucity of experienced rock-art professionals signals that open-air rock-art conservation has not received the attention that other archaeological remains have attracted.

Pictograph/Petroglyph

In total ca 301 pictographs (including 3 petroglyphs) have been found on Aruba. Of course one drawing can be as little as a point or line that may be meant as a separate drawing by the ancient artist. Still, by counting every separate representation that everybody would call a drawing one reaches at a total of approximately 270 to 331 separate drawings representation over 17 sites.

Drawings that are at tens of meters distance of each other are considered one site, one cluster. In fact, "sites" within a radius of 500 m are considered one cluster. Arikok contains one of the most beautiful rock art collections of Aruba. All pictures in this episode refer to this particular site that is situated within the premises of Aruba's National Park of the same name. During the study of the pictographs at Arikok, 4 clusters of drawings turned out to be situated on one straight line, more or less north-south over a distance of 415 m.

This article features passages, with permission from the author, taken from the PhD thesis "Fernandes, A. B., 2012. Natural processes in the degradation of open-air rock-art sites: an urgency intervention scale to inform conservation. Doctorate Thesis (Doctorate). Bournemouth University" □

Source: Island Insight column by Etnia Nativa.

You can help adding some happiness: Springboard to Work for the disabled

Oranjestad–Foundation Trampolin pa Trabou, translated Trampoline to Work, makes the difference between 'hidden and seen'. "This is all about acknowledgement by society that persons with a limitation count too. Our clients can do a lot; you just need to open yourself up to them. To them it is so much more than a job. Here we give them self-esteem, skills, happiness and a pay check. Emotionally and financially we—and hopefully you—empower. Who does not want to be part of that?" says Manager Lionel Rumnit, the motor behind the foundation, driving force by skills and heart. Rumnit also is a certified Job Coach, teaching is in his veins.

Trampolin pa Trabou is part of Foundation Sonrisa and offers a day care and teaching school for adults with limitations. "Meaning: preparing the clients in this building to give them the best starting qualifications as possible to begin working. We have deaf, visually impaired, Down Syndrome, Autism and other kind of limitations, but that does not mean you cannot work," Rumnit explains. He reaches out to the private sector, as well as the government to find job opportunities; two assistants take care of the daily in-house tasks and administration and three to six trainees from EPI College plus the cook complete the team. "We have 15 to 20 clients approximately for the full day, together with the ones that have a job we are 40 to 50, of course not all at the same time." It is a built-up process whereas clients start with a couple of days and accumulate. Rumnit: "I have more requests than I can handle, therefore we could use support



in many ways, and an incentive to companies for hiring our clients would also be more than desirable."

In-House Program

Attitude, work ethic, structure and discipline are all part of the program. In the morning, they stack away their bags and start an exercise program to activate their bodies and their brains, after that several tasks begin. "This can be cleaning, helping the cook in the kitchen or organizing. All tasks are timed to teach them to work efficient and be responsible. It starts playful but on the way gets serious," says Rumnits. 40 to 50 healthy meals are prepared on a daily basis for outside clients. "It gives my people work and an income." Work and income are provided as well with the production of ginger syrup, lemonade, sauces and turmeric. "After the ginger is brought in here, we scrub and wash, chop

it up and grind it by machine. The cook cooks it and we also clean and fill the bottles plus stick the etiquettes on them. It gives 2-3 clients daily work, teaching, empowerment and income." The ginger is sold in all big supermarkets.

7,000 Disabled and More

The need of companies that open up to the foundations clients is significant. "A lot of hotels and companies already cooperate; it is not always easy but very rewarding. Social responsibility is a part of society, we must never forget." The clients usually stay home alone, do not have many friends and in most cases depend on family. Rumnit points out that there is a lack of insight and motivation of the caregivers. "Due to that the family often gets frustrated because of the misunderstanding of the limitation. Plus they do not know where to turn to, often not directed by a house doctor to the right organizations." In 2010 there were 7,000 people with a limitation on Aruba, where are they, he wonders. Every month there is taking place an amputation of an arm or leg in the hospital, but we do not know about these people. Most are live isolated or hidden because of the taboo and the shame of the family.

If you feel inspired by this article, do not just turn the page but act upon it. You can help and support this wonderful foundation to jump higher every time. The foundation welcomes:

- More companies with job opportunities
- Financial support for their own bus to pick up clients and take them to work
- Donations for example Christmas baskets or supplies
- A sign language interpreter
- Anybody with expertise in the field to share knowledge/contribute
- Visitors & Ideas

If you would like to visit the foundation, please call + (297) 582-9485 and ask for Lionel Rumnit. If you would like to donate, the bank account is Arubabank 239-7220-290 Foundation Trampolin pa Trabou, Pavia 13-E, Oranjestad. For more information visit the website: <https://www.trampolinpatrabou.com> or Facebook: Trampolinpatrabou. Thank You! □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Trounces on the Thames
- 6 Wild fear
- 11 Sailing
- 12 Sports spot
- 13 Declaration signer
- 15 Some amount of
- 16 Had lunch
- 17 Scot's denial
- 18 Russian range
- 20 Composer of patriotic marches
- 23 Vacation spot
- 27 Trick
- 28 Some sheep
- 29 Flag features
- 31 Flexes
- 32 Brainy
- 34 "So that's it!"
- 37 Flamenco cry
- 38 Ga. neighbor
- 41 Declaration signer
- 44 River vessel
- 45 Traded
- 46 Antlered animals
- 47 Texas A&M player

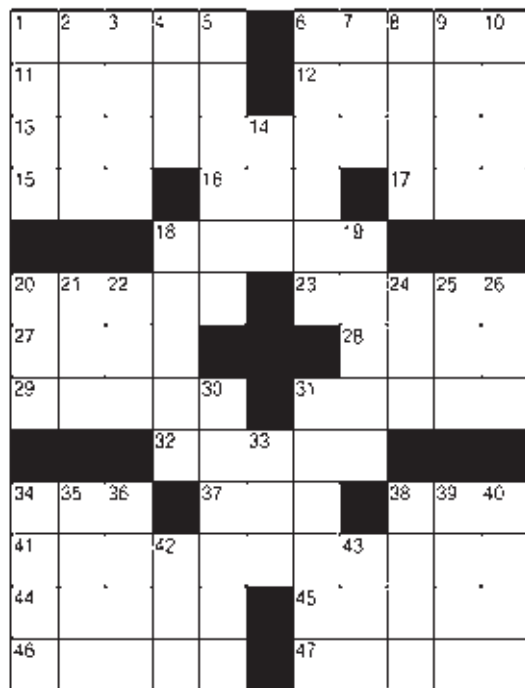
DOWN

- 1 Mexican peninsula



Yesterday's answer

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 School | 22 "Born in the —" | 34 Basics |
| 3 Pallid | 24 Possess | 35 Miami team |
| 4 Hamilton's bill | 25 Like some stripes on Old Glory | 36 "Frozen" princess |
| 5 African expanse | 26 Snaky shape | 38 Old Glory |
| 6 Comic strip makeup | 30 Cookout treats | 39 Leslie Caron film |
| 7 Pendulum path | 31 Starr of the comics | 40 Poker price |
| 8 Light gas | 33 In the style of | 42 Visibility lessener |
| 9 Early Peruvian | | 43 Beer dispenser |
| 10 Bakery buy | | |
| 14 One day — time | | |
| 18 Software buyers | | |
| 19 Paper unit | | |
| 20 Fourth-yr. students | | |
| 21 Ump's call | | |



AXYDI.BAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-4

CRYPTOQUOTE

UJWO NYZO JQOL ZO JQOL.
IEQGW QTWEZDQOR QKK! IP
HOZUZOX AW RUQOL. IP
LZGZLZOX AW SQKK.

— NYJO LZDCZORYO

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IT IS EASIER TO DO NOTHING BY THE SEA THAN ANYWHERE ELSE — E.E. BENSON

Creative ways to cut your energy costs this summer

By KIMBERLY PALMER of NerdWallet

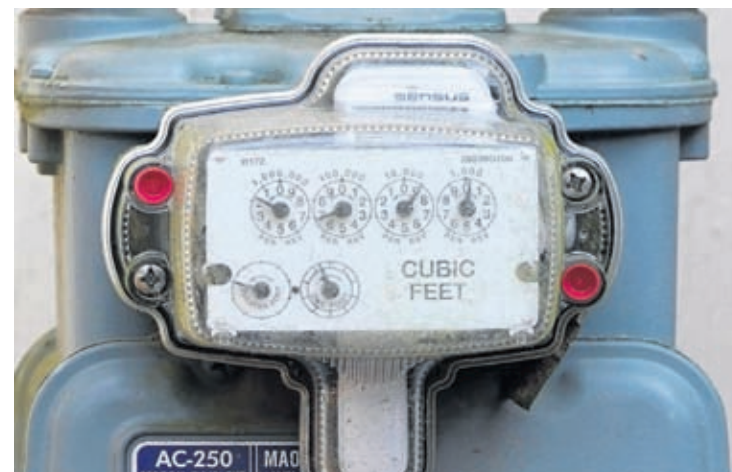
Blasting the air conditioning to counteract stifling heat can provide much-needed relief this summer, but the utility bills that follow might not be as pleasant. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the price of electricity has been steadily climbing over the past two years.

"Most U.S. households will continue to pay high costs for energy throughout the summer because of high energy prices and the anticipated hot temperatures," says Courtney Klosterman, home insights expert at insurer Hippo.

The good news is you might have more control over your energy usage than you think. Paula Glover, president of the Alliance to Save Energy, a nonprofit that advocates for energy efficiency policy, estimates that based on numbers from the Energy Department, consumers could save 10% to 20% a year on energy bills just by shifting habits and making some energy-efficient investments. But, she adds, "You have to be diligent."

TAKE A BASELINE

Before making any changes, it's helpful to examine how much energy you currently use, says Angie Hicks, co-founder of Angi, a website that provides information on home services. Hiring a professional to give your home an energy audit typically costs between \$200 and \$700 and gives you helpful information about where your home might be leaking, she adds. You can find one through local home service provider listings, and some utilities offer the service for free.



A gas meters keep tabs on usage at this Jackson, Miss., residence, Feb. 22, 2022.

Associated Press

In certain cases, electronics themselves might be leaking, says Ethan O'Donnell, digital editor of FamilyHandyman.com, a website about home improvement projects. Televisions, appliances and all kinds of other electronics can use energy even when they are turned off, he says.

A tool called an electricity usage monitor, which can be found for under \$15, helps determine exactly how much. O'Donnell discovered that his lamp, appliances and phone chargers were using more electricity than he realized even when powered off, so he made an effort to unplug them when possible and estimates he saves at least \$50 a month from those changes.

ESTABLISH EFFICIENT HABITS Simple changes like adjusting your thermostat, turning

lights off when you leave the room and keeping windows and doors shut when the air conditioning is on can go a long way, Glover says. Installing a smart thermostat, which automatically adjusts the temperature based on time, your habits and the season, can also help, she adds.

Hicks suggests leaving window coverings closed during the day to help keep the sun's heat out of your home and getting a seasonal tuneup to your air-conditioning system to make sure it's working efficiently. Changing your air filter monthly or quarterly also helps it run better, she adds.

MAKE SMALL UPGRADES

Small home improvement projects, such as adding or replacing weather stripping that seals leaks around doors and windows, can significantly reduce your energy consumption, Hicks says.

"Walk around your house with a lit candle and if the flame flickers, that's where drafts are coming in. That's a good candidate for weather stripping," she says.

Another simple job involves swapping out incandescent bulbs for LED light bulbs, which use at least 75% less energy, according to the Energy Department. "It seems like nothing but has an enormous impact when we do it collectively," Glover says. □

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What to know about Fourth of July holiday origins and traditions

By **JIM SALTER**
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The Fourth of July is Americana at its core: parades and cook-outs and cold beer and, of course, fireworks.

Those pyrotechnics also make it an especially dangerous holiday, typically resulting in more than 10,000 trips to the emergency room. Yet fireworks remain at the center of Independence Day, a holiday 247 years in the making.

Here are five things to know about July Fourth, including the origin of the holiday and how fireworks became part of the tradition.

WHAT'S THE ORIGIN OF INDEPENDENCE DAY?

The holiday celebrates the Second Continental Congress' unanimous adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, a document announcing the colonies' separation from Great Britain.

One year later, according to the Library of Congress, a spontaneous celebration in Philadelphia marked the anniversary of American independence.

But across the burgeoning nation, observations didn't become commonplace until after the War of 1812. It quickly took off: The Library of Congress notes that major historic events in the 19th century, such as groundbreaking ceremonies for the Erie Canal and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, were scheduled to coincide with Fourth of July festivities.

HOW DID FIREWORKS BECOME A JULY FOURTH TRADITION?

The display of pyrotechnics has been a big part of Independence Day from the outset. Founding Father John Adams saw it coming. Commemoration of America's independence "ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more," Adams wrote



Dominique Tafoya arranges some of the new fireworks stock at a local fireworks concession stand, July 1, 2011, in Phoenix.

in a letter to his wife, Abigail, dated July 3, 1776.

Fireworks were around centuries before America became a nation. The American Pyrotechnics Association says many historians believe fireworks were first developed in the second century B.C. in ancient China by throwing bamboo stalks into fires, causing explosions as the hollow air pockets overheated.

By the 15th century, fireworks were widely used for religious festivals and public entertainment in Europe and early U.S. settlers carried on those traditions, the association said.

HAS A PRESIDENT EVER REFUSED TO CELEBRATE?

Presidents from George Washington to Joe Biden have celebrated the nation's birth on the Fourth of July, with one exception: Adams.

His letter to his wife aside, Adams refused to celebrate the holiday on July 4 because he felt July 2 was the real Independence Day. Why? It was on July 2, 1776, that the Continental Congress voted in favor of the resolution for independence, though the Declaration of Independence wasn't formally adopted until two days later.

Adams was so adamant that he turned down invitations to festivals and other events, even while serving as the nation's second president. Ironically, Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the Declaration of Independence, both died on the 50th anniversary of the document's formal adoption, July 4, 1826.

HOW POPULAR ARE FIREWORKS?

Consumer sales of fireworks have grown rapidly over the past two decades. Statistics from the American Pyrotechnics Association show that in 2000, American consumers spent \$407 million on fireworks. By 2022, that figure rose to \$2.3 billion. The biggest jump came during the COVID-19 pandemic, when public fireworks displays were shut down. Consumer sales jumped from \$1 billion in 2019 to \$1.9 billion in 2020.

"People went to the fireworks store beginning Memorial Day weekend and they just didn't stop," said Julie Heckman, executive director of the American Pyrotechnics Association. "They were firing off fireworks all of 2020. It shocked the industry, to be quite

honest with you."

Sales are expected to rise another \$100 million this year, the association said. It helps that the Fourth of July is on a Tuesday, creating essentially a four-day weekend.

ARE FIREWORKS DANGEROUS?

Despite widespread education efforts, thousands of Americans are badly injured by fireworks each year, and this year is no exception.

Late Saturday night, firefighters and medics were called to Lexington Township, a suburb of Kansas City, Kansas, for reports of a shed on fire and arrived to find fireworks actively exploding from the burning shed and several people lying injured on the ground. Firefighters, medics and local police dragged the victims from the area to safety, and four people were taken to hospitals two with serious injuries, Northwest Consolidated Fire District Chief Todd Maxton said in a statement.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that in 2022, 10,200 people were treated at emergency rooms and 11 deaths were blamed on fireworks. About three-quarters of in-

juries happened in the period around the Fourth of July.

About one-third of the injuries were to the head, face, ears or eyes. Finger, hand and leg injuries are common, too.

"I have seen people who have blown off fingers," said Dr. Tiffany Osborn, an emergency room physician at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis.

"I've seen people who have lost eyes. I've seen people who have significant facial injuries."

Children under 15 make up nearly one-third of those injured by fireworks. Sparklers often are blamed for burns to children under age 5. Osborn suggested giving small children glow sticks or colorful streamers instead.

For those planning to shoot off fireworks, Heckman urged finding a flat, hard, level surface away from structures and other things that could catch fire. The person responsible for the fireworks should avoid alcohol. Children should never ignite them.

Osborn encouraged having a bucket or hose nearby in case of fire or explosion. Shoot off one at a time and walk away quickly after igniting, she said, and never relight or handle a malfunctioned firework. When done, shovel up the remains and soak them before disposing. □

**ARUBA
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Philipsen wins third stage of the Tour de France

BAYONNE, France (AP) — Belgian cyclist Jasper Philipsen won the third stage of the Tour de France in a bunched sprint on Monday, while Adam Yates of Britain kept the race leader's yellow jersey.

The 25-year-old Philipsen, who won two stages in last year's race, was expertly led to the front by his Alpecin-Deceuninck teammate Mathieu van der Poel and comfortably held off German rider Phil Bauhaus and Australian Caleb Ewan as they dashed to the line. "It was a tense final, but this is the Tour de France: there are no presents, everybody goes all-in," Philipsen said. "It's amazing to have Mathieu as a lead-out man. If he had the space to go, for sure he has the speed to fight for the win."

Danish sprinter Fabio Jakobsen was fourth ahead of Belgian standout Wout van Aert, who failed to overtake Philipsen on the right in the last 50 meters and backed off near a crash barrier.

They all clocked 4 hours, 43 minutes, 15 seconds on the 193-kilometer (120-mile) route from Amorebieta-Etxano in Spain's Basque country to Bayonne in France.



Belgium's Jasper Philipsen, left, celebrates as he crosses the finish line ahead of second placed Germany's Phil Bauhaus, right, to win the third stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 187.5 kilometers (116.5 miles) with start in Morebieta Etxano, Spain and finish in Bayonne, France, Monday, July 3, 2023.

The main contenders for the overall win arrived safely.

Yates maintained his six-second lead over two-time Tour winner Tadej Pogačar of Slovenia and his twin brother Simon Yates in third. "For us it's been more about recovering as much as possible," Yates said. "It's hard to have the chance to do so in the Tour de France, so we try and grab every chance we get."

Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard of Denmark stayed in sixth spot heading into Tuesday's fourth stage.

Pogačar, who had surgery on his broken left wrist following a crash during the Liège-Bastogne-Liège classic, was relieved to avoid any danger.

"I tried to stay safe in the finale, as it was a really fast finish but the rest of the stage was calmer. So far,

so good," Pogačar said. "We have two easier days from the GC (general classification) perspective, as I hope tomorrow's stage is like today's, and then we will hit the Pyrenees."

Monday's trek rolled serenely past the Zenaruzza monastery and through hilly countryside under reposing blue skies, before crossing over into France. American Neilson Powless and French veteran Lau-

rent Pichon set off early on a breakaway, but others did not follow and took it rather easy in terms of speed. Pogačar punctured his rear tire, but smiled as he easily made his way back to the peloton.

Powless gave a thumbs up to the crowd and a peace sign to the television camera alongside him after being the first to reach the top of the Cote de Milloi one of four small climbs on an otherwise flat route passing by quaint fishing villages on the Atlantic coast.

French rider Victor Lafay, the winner of Sunday's second stage, gave chase briefly to gain some points in the quest for the green jersey awarded each year for best sprinter.

Powless pumped his right fist after completing the fourth climb and, having collected all the day's points counting toward the best climber's polka-dot jersey, he then dropped off the pace.

"It has been a successful day. I got to score some KOM (King of the Mountains) points today and it didn't cost too much energy," Powless said. "I felt very good today. Everything is going in a good direction. □"

Associated Press

Two-time champion Pete Alonso to participate in Home Run Derby

By LARRY FLEISHER

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Mets slugger Pete Alonso will participate in the All-Star Home Run Derby on July 10 in Seattle, looking to win for the third time.

"I'm stoked," Alonso said after hitting his 25th homer Sunday night in New York's 8-4 victory over the San Francisco Giants. "It's a really fun event. The field is extremely talented and I think this is going to be a derby that a lot of people are going to remember for a long time."

Alonso was selected to his third All-Star team earlier in the day, and New York's lone representative on the

National League squad will take part in the derby for the fourth time. He joins a field so far that also includes Tampa Bay outfielder Randy Arozarena, Los Angeles Dodgers star Mookie Betts, Toronto first baseman Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Seattle outfielder Julio Rodríguez.

Alonso won the competition in 2019 and 2021. Ken Griffey Jr. (1998-99) and Yoenis Céspedes (2013-14) are the only other back-to-back champions in the history of the event, which began in 1985.

The 2020 edition was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his rookie season, Alonso

edged Guerrero 23-22 in the final round with just seconds to spare to claim a \$1 million prize.

Two years later, Alonso hit 74 homers at Coors Field in Colorado and won the derby by edging Trey Mancini in the finals.

Last year at Dodger Stadium, Alonso topped Atlanta star Ronald Acuña Jr. in the first round before losing 31-23 to Rodríguez in the semi-finals.

Alonso is hitting .221 with 25 homers and 58 RBIs in 76 games this season. He missed 10 games with a bruised left wrist but made a speedy return from the injury.

"I thought that the derby

wasn't necessarily the biggest priority when I was coming back from the wrist," Alonso said. "It was

trying to come back and be as productive as I can for my team. □"



New York Mets' Pete Alonso watches his two-run home run against the Houston Astros during the sixth inning of a baseball game Wednesday, June 21, 2023, in Houston.

Associated Press



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Venus Williams falls early in her first match at her 24th Wimbledon and loses

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**

AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP)

— As Venus Williams entered Centre Court for her 24th Wimbledon appearance at age 43, greeted by a standing ovation, she held a green exercise band overhead with both hands and stretched it while striding to her sideline seat.

Once her first-round match against Elina Svitolina began, Williams played like a throwback version of herself. Those big serves. Those crisp strokes. Quickly, she was a point from a 3-0 lead on Monday.

And then, moving forward to attempt a volley, Williams slipped on the green grass. Her right foot gave way. She collapsed to the ground. She shrieked and clutched at her right knee, which already was covered by a beige sleeve. Williams twice was treated by a trainer including getting that knee taped up during a medical timeout after the first set and although the American kept playing, she could not manage to overcome 2019 Wimbledon semifinalist Svitolina in a 6-4, 6-3 defeat. "I'm not sure what I've done. I'm going to have to investigate it tomorrow. It's late today. But it was quite painful," Williams said. "Grass is inherently going to be slippery; you're going to fall at some point. It was just bad luck for me. I started the match perfectly. I was literally killing it. And then I got killed by the grass." Williams, a former No. 1 now ranked outside the Top 500 after a series of injuries that limited her to 22 matches since the start of 2021, was the oldest player in this year's field and the fourth-oldest to



Officials assist after Venus Williams of the US slipped as she plays Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, left, in a first round women's singles match on day one of the Wimbledon tennis championships in London, Monday, July 3, 2023.

compete in the main draw at Wimbledon. "Right now, I'm kind of in shock. I can't believe this happened. It's bizarre. I'm still processing it at the moment," Williams said at her news conference, more than an hour after the match ended. "What makes this one hard to process is that I've had so many injuries. ... This is not what I want for myself." Svitolina was only 2 when Williams made her Wimbledon debut in 1997 and just 5 when Williams won the event for the first time in 2000. "It's always a pleasure to play against Venus," Svitolina said, calling her opponent a "big legend." No. 1-ranked Iga Swiatek, who won her opening match 6-1, 6-3 against Zhu Lin, used that same term "legend" to describe Williams. "I admire (how) she still finds motivation to play. I think it's amazing. She really must love the game,

like truly," said Swiatek, who has won four major titles but is yet to get past the fourth round at the All England Club.

Something of a surprise arrived at No. 1 Court just before darkness arrived Monday, when Coco Gauff who burst onto the scene at age 15 by beating Williams in the opening round at Wimbledon was eliminated by Sofia Kenin 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in a highlight-reel matchup between two Americans. While Kenin did win the 2020 Australian Open, even knocking off Gauff along the way, she had exited in the first round at each of her past three majors, is ranked just 128th and needed to go through qualifying rounds to get into the main draw at Wimbledon. Gauff, meanwhile, was seeded No. 7 and established herself as a consistent Week 2 presence at Slams, including a run to

the French Open final last year. Williams' other four titles at the All England Club arrived in 2001, 2005, 2007 and 2008, too, along with a pair of U.S. Open trophies in singles plus 14 in women's doubles with her younger sister, Serena, who retired after last season.

The older Williams also was the runner-up at Wimbledon four times, most recently during a resurgent 2017, a season in which she reached a total of two finals and another semifinal at majors. Since then? Williams who announced her diagnosis with Sjögren's syndrome, an energy-sapping auto-immune disease that can cause joint pain, in 2011 has lost in the first round at 10 of her most recent 15 Grand Slam events. There were some vintage moments on Monday. Serves at up to 117 mph. The big cuts on forehands and two-handed back-

hands that either produced clean winners or led to forced errors by Svitolina. There also were 33 unforced errors, 18 more than Svitolina. Williams' total in that category included eight double-faults.

The tumble that brought a hush over the stadium came after merely 12 minutes of play and, as she stayed down on the grass, getting chalk on her left leg, it appeared as if she might need to stop. The chair umpire rushed over to check on Williams. So did Svitolina, carrying a white towel to tuck under Williams' head. "I'm a competitor. That's what I do for a living. I did what I could today," Williams said later. "I've played through a lot of matches and won a lot of matches injured. Its kind of a specialty of mine. I just never figured it out today."

Still, the crowd certainly was appreciative of the persistence and effort Williams displayed on Monday, rising to salute her and shower her with applause when she left the court with a quick wave and a slight hitch in her step. During the match, there were too many cries of "Go, Venus!" or "You can do it!" to count. Truth is, both players are sympathetic figures, and Svitolina, who is 28, heard her own support from the stands. She is from Ukraine which has been under attack from Russia for nearly 1 1/2 years and returned to the tour in April after giving birth in October to the first child for her and her husband, tennis player Gael Monfils. Svitolina wound up with more aces than Williams, 6-2, and nearly twice as many total winners, 28-16. □

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